

The Danger Of Overstatement

Joe Slater

Your manner of life ought to clue people in that you are a Christian. That being the case, they may well ask what you believe about various subjects, and you should answer with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

Unfortunately, professing “Christians” have come up with some strange, even bizarre distortions of Biblical teaching. In our zeal to reject those falsehoods, we run the danger of overstating our case. Here’s what I mean:

Someone asks, “Do you believe in predestination?” My knee-jerk reaction is to say, “No!” But that is an overstatement! It denies what the Bible plainly says in Romans 8 and Ephesians 1. I ought to say, “Yes, I believe in Biblical predestination, but not in Calvinistic predestination.” Then I have an opportunity to point out the difference.

Or I might be asked, “Do you believe in miracles?” While thinking of Bennie Hinn and Kenneth Copeland, I might say, “No!” But again, that’s a huge overstatement. I ought to say, “Yes, I believe in the miracles of the Bible, but I don’t believe that God has endowed anyone today with the ability to work miracles.” Then I have an opportunity to explain what a real miracle is, along with the purpose and duration of the supernatural gifts some early Christians had.

What if I am asked, “Do you believe in salvation by grace?” To answer, “No!” flies in the face of the Holy Spirit’s teaching through the apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:8). Now, do I accept the modern denominational perversion of “grace alone”? Of course not! But instead of overstating my case, I ought to use the opening to explain the Biblical doctrine of salvation by God’s infinite grace. Overstatement closes the door to further teaching, which is obviously counterproductive.

COVERING UP OR DIGGING DEEP?

Every time I start doing major work on one of the walls of my house, I get nervous. What might look like a perfectly good wall on the outside often reveals serious problems on the inside. I have removed wallpaper only to find improperly-installed sheetrock or covered-up holes. Behind the sheetrock I have found poorly-placed studs, bad wiring, lack of insulation, and even tools – sealed up and forgotten. The outward finishing might make things look pretty for a time, but eventually the underlying problems will show through.

Many of us live our lives this way. On the surface we try to put up really pretty wallpaper, but underneath we are unfinished and messed up.

For a while this might seem to work, but over time it becomes hard to put on a smile and present a pretty front for all to see. The pretty exterior can hold up only for so long before the problems underneath begin to show. Trying to live this way is exhausting and will lead only to heartache and pain.

Each and every one of us has messed up our lives in some way. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23).

Fortunately, we don’t have to go around just pretending that everything is OK. We actually can fix our problems and move on. You see, there is this really good Repair Man. He is a carpenter, a shepherd, and a great physician; but most importantly, He is our Savior. His name is Jesus the Christ, and He is the only one capable of putting our lives back together.

So, next time you realize you’ve made a mess of things, don’t try to hide it. Instead, call on the only one you know who can fix it – and turn your life over to Him!

--Luke Bowers (Abilene, TX) via *Old Paths*

JUNK OR JEWEL? (The Pinky Bates Story, #2)

(continued from last week)

God made me in His image! No, God doesn’t make junk – but man has the ability to take the finest jewelry and trash it!

There was a time I felt useless. My drugging and drinking got me shot, stabbed, and lots of broken bones. Vehicles ran over me three times. I’ve been in a body cast from my armpits to my ankles. I’ve suffered a broken nose, jaw, legs, arms, ribs, and hands. My insane lifestyle destroyed three marriages, two profitable businesses, and plenty of good jobs. I’ve been arrested over 30 times that I recall. I spent lots of birthdays and holidays locked up. I spent time in a French prison and one in Mexico. I once escaped from the military stockade in France only to realize I made a big mistake . . . I didn’t speak the language, was flat broke, barefooted, hungry, and exhausted. I was “free” but trapped! As usual, I had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. So I rushed back to the prison and asked if I could be re-admitted!

The words Buck spoke to me in prison stuck in my head: “Don’t give up, God can still use you.” How could my sorry past be useful to anyone? Our Lord said, “*With men, it is impossible, but with God all things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26). By God’s amazing grace I was blessed in 1992 to go back to the same prison where I did time – but as a servant of Christ this time instead of a lawbreaker! Today I constantly praise Him for bringing “*my soul out of prison*” (Psalm 142:7). I know that with God I have endless hope; without Him, I had a hopeless end.

(To Be Continued Next Week)